

HUGPONG: Teaching as a Team in the Social Sciences (A Collaborative Strategy for Virtual Classroom Innovation)

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Abstract

The global pandemic inevitably changed the landscape of learning from the physical to the virtual classroom setup. The challenges for both academics and learners alike went beyond the technological aspect in navigating remote learning. It implied a need for pedagogical innovation to promote meaningful understanding among the learners and effective teaching delivery among practitioners. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, this study zeroed in on Team Teaching as a Social Science Collaborative Strategy in the new normal. Best practices of academics across Cebu City's higher education institutions that utilize varied forms of team teaching were described and categorized. Results manifested varied forms of team teaching as virtual learning strategies came with a few challenges. As such, a teaching model, HUGPONG, aimed at facilitating collaborative teaching in the Social Sciences, was crafted.

Keywords

team teaching, virtual classroom, teaching innovation in the new normal, Cebu City higher education institutions (HEIs), social sciences

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic has shaken the world systems in many ways. Not only have the political and economic institutions shifted, but so have the social institutions, which carry the basic structures in a society. Social institutions like religion, family, health care, and education function to maintain peace and order. But with the sudden unexpected shift, a social disequilibrium has emerged, leading to the alterations of the functions of said institutions (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2022). In the realm of education, institutions of all sizes and types all over the globe have moved towards online classes with the intent of staying relevant in these challenging times. Nonetheless, the stories of struggles among teachers and students alike continue to abound, as discussed in rising discourses on education digitalization (Radina & Balakina, 2021).

However, studies on digital learning are not new in education literature. Digitalized classrooms already existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced higher institutions to transition fully to virtual classrooms. In the study, "Blended Learning and Team Teaching: Adapting Pedagogy in Response to the Changing Digital Tertiary Environment," Crawford and Jenkins (2017) explore the merit of utilizing

digital platforms as an alternative teaching medium to address the decreased government funding and support to higher education institutions. In the end, the paper found out the potential use of blended learning and of team teaching in a tertiary classroom setting is feasible, given the proper technological resources and the capacity training of teaching practitioners. The paper posits that online platforms must be at pace with the growing expectations and innovations in the highly digitalized society. Thus, considering it in general terms, with the ubiquity of digital spaces, the premise of online learning became a rising priority of interest in higher education development discourses both in the Global North and South (Radina & Balakina, 2021).

In most cases, a vast majority of college students willingly utilize up-to-date technology and have considerable experience in remote education due to its convenience and adaptability. However, in the recent context, Radina and Balakina (2021) emphasized the nature behind this transition as forced rather than freely chosen as a better alternative. Thus, coming with this transition to online platforms is the implication of further problematic factors that need to be considered. Accordingly, Hughes et al. (2020) expounded that despite the efforts to optimize resources and respond to the situation during the transition to remote education by educational institutions, other factors have to be considered. Such would pertain to health, wellness, safety, and other conditions of their families. Therefore, there is a need for adjustment in expectations, delivery, and content for teaching effectiveness to be considered.

This is where the challenge of teaching under the new normal begins. As academics transition into the new normal, pedagogies that can easily adapt to the virtual platform are necessities. As learning platforms continue to adapt to the changing times, there is a need to innovate existing strategies to make them suitable for the emerging societal challenges.

With this, this study aims to explore the different forms of team teaching practiced by Social Science content experts who are teaching either general education courses or major courses under the umbrella of said discipline, in general, and the BA Political Science program, in particular. The fact that general education courses are part of the required curriculum among all students across disciplines, a study on how team-teaching delivers content is an interesting venture. Also, the facilitation in the delivery of major courses will give us a view of how sessions are handled across an audience now in a virtual setup. It is a fact that the advent of virtual classrooms needs to transform platform skills and effective communication through strategies that are apt, unconventional, and responsive. At the end of this study, the researcher intends to come up with a teaching model for the enrichment of discussions in the virtual classroom.

Related Literature

Team Teaching as a Collaborative Practice

Catherine Hansman (2001) described the importance of learning through experience and collaboration, stressing that “adult learning takes place in a context where tools and the context intersect with interaction among people.” Not only are varied platforms of collaboration needed to keep the students engaged with remote learning in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions, but the lecture discussions of teachers have to be interactive as well. Truly, collaboration unfolds along different veins — teacher-student, teacher-teacher, and student-student. It is in this light that the researcher focuses on team teaching as a strategy for online teaching.

Out of these collaborative practices is the rising strategy of 'team teaching,' a pedagogy that promotes interactive lecture discussions. On the learner's end, there is a higher degree of interest in listening and engagement. According to Davis (1995), team teaching pertains to “all arrangements that include two or more faculty in some level of collaboration in the planning and delivery of a course.” In another literature,

[Crawford and Jenkins \(2017\)](#) provide clear classifications on team teaching strategies in a digitalized learning environment, specifically;

- a. Participant-observer. Teachers/lecturers are present in all classes and both are teaching and instructing. However, they work independently from each other, not together;
- b. Interactive. Teachers/lecturers are present to work together to teach, instruct, and engage with students in the discussion; and
- c. Rotational. Each teacher/lecturer or faculty teaches different parts of the course. He /She is only present when it is his/her time to teach. This method requires an excellent level of planning to ensure that there is no overlapping or repetition. It is primarily characterized by the shift in teacher–teacher relationship; its nature is far from the conventional way in the delivery of a lecture.

All these are aimed at providing students an avenue where more experts converge and cooperate by sharing their ideas and perspectives. Team teaching is perceived as an alternative model for solo ([Rosenfeld et al., 2013](#)). On the part of the academics, there is unity in collaboration and variety in strategy in terms of platform skills.

Usage, Benefits, and Challenges in Team Teaching

Team teaching as a pedagogy has originally been adapted to learning environments that are considered challenging. A 2001 study by [Murawski and Lee Swanson](#) suggests that co-teaching is a delivery option designed to cater to students with special needs who enroll in general education classrooms. This is also a common setup for early childhood education, primary education, and even high school learning environments where the honing of understanding among child learners is needed ([Chang et al., 2015](#)).

While it has been established above that team teaching practices are originally aimed towards the young or learners with special needs, the same practice of collaborative teaching has also been adopted at tertiary levels of education. In the [Federation University of Australia \(n.d.\)](#), it was argued that team teaching as a teaching practice among tertiary educators has become a trend in modern classrooms. Aside from better service delivery to students, it also demonstrates the process of professional collaboration. It also allows a wider and more nuanced understanding of learning concepts and opens a safe avenue for deliberative discussions, exploring differing ideas and opinions, as well as respectfully absorbing different perspectives of issues.

The emphasis is on how team teaching arrangements simultaneously foster increased student learning and offer opportunities for the skills enhancement and professional development among faculty members. [Fennick and Liddy \(2001\)](#) give a special focus on the latter, specifically on the perspectives of faculty members engaged in co-teaching practices. They argued that the opportunity for shared class management and for knowledge exchange was beneficial. However, there are a lot of challenges involved in the proper delineation of roles and responsibilities among co-teachers and the conflicting expectations of co-teaching teams that come from different disciplines or fields of expertise. This was said to create friction in the process of effective delivery of learning services to children with special needs on which their study was based. A core recommendation of the study was geared towards inter-faculty development, especially in training for co-planning, effective collaboration, and inclusive teaching.

For the student side of the argument, [Dugan and Letterman \(2008\)](#) accounted the varied reactions of students who have experienced learning under team-teaching setups. They emphasized that students who experienced both traditional and team-teaching styles have evaluated both similarly. However, in quantitative data, there was a noted preference for co-teaching over traditional teaching styles.

Furthermore, there was also a preference for team teaching of two instructors in the same classroom rather than a team-teaching arrangement of two instructors at different times under the same course. This is the same for [Killingworth and Xue's \(2015\)](#) study on the influence of team teaching on student learning outcomes and on competency. They found out the significant impact of the clarity of course objectives, affiliation, and innovation to have a positive influence on student outcomes. All in all, the discourse on team teaching as a pedagogy is not a new one. However, arguments that advocate for or critic the teaching style have evolved over time as influenced by modern arrangements as well as growing technologies.

Team Teaching Practices in the Philippines

Faithful to their origin, team teaching setups in the Philippines adopt primarily among the learning arrangements that demand customization and cater to special needs or other integrative and interdisciplinary settings. Documented literature in the country focuses on the adoption of team teaching in multi-grade schools in rural areas ([Delgado et al., 2019](#)), basic education levels ([Acadedios, 2015](#)), technical vocational and livelihood secondary programs ([Esquivel & Cuenca, 2022](#)), English Language Learning ([Tiongson, 2018](#)), and among others. A common agreement among these widely diverse studies is the way team teaching enables positive learning among students in non-traditional settings. On the other hand, a common concern is the process by which the advocates can formally institutionalize team teaching in school settings, considering the administrative and organizational re-arrangements in the future, as most of them were done through informal arrangements among instructors. Despite this, they were able to conclude that team teaching has been an innovative teaching style that can significantly influence more comprehensive learning experiences among young students.

Having established the point above, the literature that specifically investigates team teaching applications in tertiary-level education is limited. While there are existing local-based studies that offer perspectives from university-level learners, perspectives are probed from the student side rather than from the instructors'. To point out, [Padilla \(2020\)](#) focuses on the effect of team teaching on student learning styles and its perceived effects on student performance and attitudes in their specializations. He discovered that team teaching positively influences student engagement since it enables the maximization of different learning styles in the classroom. It also yields high acceptance and optimism among college student learners as it is perceived to improve their ways of dealing with academic output demands, especially in major subjects. Thus, seeing this lack, this study will be able to contribute to the limited discourse of team teaching pedagogies in tertiary education in the country.

Team Teaching and Virtual Classrooms

Another dimension of this study is the thrust of team teaching strategies outside the traditional 'physical classroom' where the majority of the discourse, both international and local, is centered. It incorporates elements that can only be found in the post-pandemic 'new normal' where digital classrooms have become an embedded part of learning from basic to tertiary levels of education.

Understandably, conversations on team teaching in online learning are scarce, as it is consequent to the pandemic-learning experiences from the last two to three years. Though there are studies that discuss about this pre-pandemic topic, they mostly revolve around the experience of middle school learners. However, even post-pandemic, the topic has also been limited. The work of [Stokowski et al. \(2024\)](#) summarizes the experience of US-based university graduates. It was found out that the majority of the graduate-level learners in a virtual team teaching classroom perceived the experience positively.

[Natriello and Chae \(2023\)](#), in their study, 'Models and Methods of Online Team Teaching,' present the idea of the intersection of virtual learning and team teaching and focus more on the limits of the digital environment in maximizing the previously identified benefits of team teaching in physical classroom setup. They emphasized challenges in the configuration of multi-instructor arrangements. However, much of the discourse is still missing.

The gaps in the literature on virtual team teaching in the new normal need a perspective from developing countries. There is also the element of the lack of perspective from the side of the 'co-teachers' as opposed to the prevalent perspectives on 'student' perceptions and attitudes that are presented in the existing literature. Against this backdrop, the study probes the team teaching practices in Cebu, Philippines. This narrows down on the experiences of professors from the Social Sciences during the onset of the pandemic. The aim is to offer a teaching model to contribute to the rising discourse on virtual classroom setups and how they can be referenced by educational institutions in the country as we grapple with the new normal.

METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research methodology employing the case study approach. In studies where qualitative perspectives are sought, the case study sampling technique is most useful. As a research strategy, it allows a detailed account of the 'unit of analysis' investigated ([Priya, 2021](#)). In the context of this paper, the experiences of academicians in the tertiary education setting are explored. The specific focus is the adoption of team teaching as a pedagogy amidst the digitalization of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study centers around the experiences of success and struggles of tertiary teaching practitioners in the remote teaching setup during the pandemic. More importantly, the motivation and utilization of team teaching strategies in the new normal classroom setup are explored.

Probing questions were asked to the key informants for elaboration and for details. The complete set of questions was found in the interview guide. Researcher-made interview guide aided in gathering the data from the informants. The personal interview with the key informants was done through Google Meet. Such interviews were key in capturing the personal experiences of the informants vis-a-vis team teaching in the new normal classroom setup. The data generated was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Using [Braun and Clarke's \(2006, as cited in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017\)](#) thematic analysis, the data analysis included six (6) steps, specifically;

1. Familiarizing the data;
2. Generating initial codes;
3. Searching for themes;
4. Reviewing themes;
5. Defining themes; and
6. Producing the report.

At the end of each interview, the researcher reminded the key informants through electronic mail to seek verification of the data gathered to make sure that the findings were truly reflective of their own experiences. The level of data saturation was determined such that no new information appeared in interviews, and the same concepts and themes arose in the data analysis ([Sapanta, 2021](#)).

As a matter of procedure through Informed Consent, the respondents were notified at the onset that they may discontinue participation in the ongoing study without any implication of penalty or

loss of incentive they may be otherwise entitled to if they feel uncomfortable with the questions asked. Respondents were made aware that the interview would last not more than an hour on a mutually agreed date and time and would follow the researcher-made Interview Guide for clarity and for structure of the entire interview flow. The said Interview Guide has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the researcher's academic institution with the Ethics Certification Code: 010/2021-08-Cuizon.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of the study is to describe how team teaching can be utilized as a pedagogy in teaching the Social Sciences under the new normal classroom setup.

More specifically, the study intends to:

- a. identify the different teaching strategies adopted by teaching practitioners in digital classrooms;
- b. narrate the experiences of academicians in employing collaborative and team teaching as a pedagogy, and
- c. design a teaching model for the enrichment of the virtual classroom experience through team teaching.

Identification of Research Locale and Respondents

The study's respondents were the Key Informants (KI), considered content experts in the field of Social Sciences. In selecting respondents for KI, the researcher used the variant approach. A variant is a key-informant approach (Spradley, 1979) or intensity sampling (Patton, 1990) in which a subject who is an expert in the topic of study provides expert information on the specialized topic.

There were eight (8) academics who participated in this study with the following Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria: They have at least eight (8) years of experience as educators in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and have handled General Education (G.E.) courses in the Social Sciences and/or major courses in the BA Political Science Program. The identification of the eight (8) KIs was based on the breadth of their experience and their availability at the time of the conduct of the study. The said number was considered as a good representative number of premiere HEIs in the city because the study would use the case study method.

Furthermore, higher education institutions include public and private colleges and universities in Cebu City that offer BA Political Science programs—streamlined to two (2) public state universities and two (2) private HEIs. These selected universities have proven their status as premier institutions of higher education offering various degree programs, specifically, BA Political Science in undergraduate studies. Four (4) key informants represented the private HEIs, and another four (4) from the public HEIs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the data obtained from the respondents, four emergent themes were generated: Adaptive Teaching Strategies in the New Normal, Teaching Challenges in the New Normal, the Necessity of Collaborative Teaching Practices, and Team Teaching Resulting from Collaboration. As seen in the following tables, Tables 1 to 3 give a visual presentation of the cluster themes and Emergent themes generated from the transcription.

Theme 1: Adaptive Teaching Strategies in the New Normal

The new normal setup for the delivery of teaching calls for innovative teaching strategies. Table 1 exhibits the teaching strategies adapted by academicians in this challenging time.

Table 1. Adaptive Teaching Strategies in the New Normal

Cluster Themes	Emergent Theme
<p>The teaching strategies in the virtual classroom include output-based workshops, the conduct of webinars, and content creation for students as the teacher provides necessary materials, facilitation, and guidance.</p> <p>The strategies for online learning are geared towards an engaging student-centered and student-friendly approach.</p> <p>Teachers' strategies specific employment on engagement and facilitation for synchronous sessions while maintaining patience and consideration for designated asynchronous outputs.</p>	Adaptive Teaching Strategies in the New Normal

As espoused by the table, the first emerging theme is the adaptation of teaching strategies in the new normal. This refers to the specific adjustments and flexibility added to their teaching setup to accommodate the emergent needs in the context of virtual learning during the pandemic. This centers on the implementation of student-centered and student-friendly approaches and is manifested by setting "floating deadlines" and trying to adjust with the student's capacity to keep up with assigned tasks. A key informant said, "I have implemented since the pandemic started what we call "floating deadline"...for content for example, you cannot bombard your students with a lot of reading materials, you have to select at least (kadto) quality and relevant (sa imohang) course noh?" She elaborated that there was no definite cut-off date for the submission of outputs but rather the date for submission was open for as long as the semester was still not over. Adjustments were done by the teachers to accommodate students' requests and appeals as they had different circumstances. In general, the implementation of flexible deadlines in the academic setting was a rising pedagogical movement among academic practitioners even before the COVID-19 pandemic. That was a compliance setup that transferred a portion of the decision-making to students in meeting their learning goals as set by their assigned faculty. In an exhaustive study by [Hills and Peacock \(2022\)](#), it was discovered that 'floating deadlines' and extensions improved the quality of work submitted by the students and enabled them better management of academic workloads. This is highlighted in the recommendation, where flexible deadlines are encouraged as a 'proactive' classroom policy to foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. That was a consideration of the added stress of learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, there is a noted difference in shifting from asynchronous and synchronous class sessions. These are peculiar features of online teaching which is absent in face-to-face class instruction. Asynchronous e-learning, which is commonly facilitated by media such as e-mail and discussion boards, supports work relations among learners and teachers, even when participants cannot be online at the same time ([Hrastinski, 2008](#)). Whereas, synchronous e-learning, commonly supported by media such as videoconferencing and chat, has the potential to support e-learners in the development of learning communities ([Hrastinski, 2008](#)). Simply put, asynchronous is done offline, while synchronous is delivered online. These two modes of teaching-learning scheme add to the demand of the virtual classroom. As such, apt teaching strategies with the aid of technology are necessitated to shift fully into the new normal.

As seen in Table 1, for synchronous sessions, the teachers employed engaging and facilitative teaching techniques to keep the students involved. Online interaction became an avenue for sharing opinions and positions on key social issues happening in the immediate community and the rest of the world. This

reinforced teachers as facilitators rather than lecturers. As an informant put it, *“Usually teacher-centered (kaayo ang akong) approach (sauna). I do a lot of lectures and discussions. But this time we are giving the students more time to independently learn on their own. (Bali) they have to read more.”* Indeed, the role was to facilitate both asynchronous and synchronous sessions and to make such a “felt” role in both online and offline teaching sessions.

As for asynchronous sessions, technology-aided teaching materials were utilized and uploaded to the available learning management system (LMS). Spotify, YouTube, and podcasts were among the top online applications teachers maximize. A reflective teaching style to maintain patience and understanding for late submission, non-submission, and non-communication thereof of individual or group tasks assigned to them was adapted. Teachers have become inward-looking, rather than outward-looking in assessing what they can compromise in their teaching pedagogy. Less becomes more, and more becomes less. The battle cry is “quality over quantity”, and “authentic assessment over paper-pencil tests.” Examples of authentic assessment are output-based workshops, the conduct of webinars, and content creation for advocacy campaigns. But, in reality, this is easier said than done. Teachers are still in the adjustment phase, and there is still much to be done. As such, in a study on ‘Technology Integration in Higher Education During COVID-19,’ Akram et al. (2021) affirm the necessity of technology integration in the classroom. In particular, there is a demand for faculty development in terms of ICT-related competencies, especially in learning environments where traditional teaching methods have been used for a long time. As educational institutions adjust to this forced virtual transition, they encounter many challenges considered as emergent theme explained in the next section of this paper.

Theme 2: Teaching Challenges in the New Normal

As the pandemic continued, the challenges in the virtual classroom also expanded. The teaching strategies employed at the onset of the new normal might have worked but the landscape in teaching has continually changed. With the online teaching setup, not only have students been pushed to learn independently, but also teachers have worked individually. They have isolated themselves from their academic peers since the academic force has followed the work from home scheme. Students and teachers have confronted challenges and issues brought about by the new normal. They (challenges and issues of concern) also come from two-faced, one, the student perspective; the other, the teacher perspective. Such include:

Mental Health

It cannot be gainsaid that the current learning setup can take a toll on the mental health of both the learners and the teachers. The students navigate the challenges and pitfalls of online learning. On the other hand, the teachers share the burden of the already arduous task of teaching while striking a good balance between synchronous and asynchronous sessions as they assign course work and activities and have consultations in-between. This becomes an added challenge as a new reality. A key informant expressed, *“Besides, I did not want the faculty to be too exhausted in carrying too many courses all by themselves. Because at the end of the day, both faculty members and students have mental issues to deal with.”*

For the learners, concerns such as low bandwidth capacity due to several factors (location, availability of the network, etc.), personal/family issues, gadget concerns (gadget sharing, using only a cellphone/tablet instead of laptop or PC), and among others contribute to their anxiety in the new normal setup. For this reason, the teacher has to bend over backward to make necessary adjustments

and accommodations. *"We have to take note that we are not the only subject of our students."* To the learners, if all subjects are demanding, it can cause them their mental health, *"...Based sa evaluation sa students, kung tanan kuno subjects ing-ana, wala na. Maguba na ilang mental health."* Those were some responses gathered from the virtual interview of the key informants. That emphasis on technology-related and academic-related challenges during the COVID-19 learning setup was an essential addition to the discourse on learning during the pandemic, as existing literature highlights pandemic-induced isolation and excessive social restriction as key factors for reduced well-being and mental health among learners rather than lack of digital infrastructure (Holm-Handulla et al., 2021).

The teachers had to be wary also of the perils of technology, as personally experienced by one of the KIs, *"Then there's also issue on cheating noh? For Political Science classes, ang akoang perspective is let's take advantage of the fact that you can access the net noh nga ang exams open book, open sources gyud noh sa Internet. But I keep on reminding them not to copy paste from the internet. You have to process the data that you want to be incorporated in your answers kay at the end of the day, it's also a test of their integrity and character ma'am eh."*

Amzalag et al.'s (2022) supplement this finding in the article, Two Sides of the Coin: Lack of Academic Integrity in Exams During the Corona Pandemic, Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions. There was evidence on the rise of cheating incidences among students during online exams and activities made possible by technological advancements that aid unethical student behavior. Indications of lowered mutual trust among students and faculty also surfaced, which the study predicts will endure even in the context of post-pandemic learning. All in all, the dynamics of technology also call for changing policies to better suit the needs of the time.

Likewise, for both teachers and students, the reproductive work at home also elevates mental health concerns. They have to juggle work or studies with their responsibilities and roles in the household. Matharani et al. (2021) highlight this as a cultural tendency among developing countries where domestic responsibilities are inherent to every member of the family. In the COVID-19 learning setup, the challenge was the lack of delineation between academic and household activities that existed pre-pandemic because of the need to be physically present in classroom spaces away from home. The study narrows down the pressure on household chores, taking care of younger siblings, and lack of family support as some of the emergent challenges that negatively affect mental health and induce added stress among online learners.

Low Level of Participation

In terms of attendance and participation, it is dwindling due to several factors. As per observation by the teachers, attendance may be deterred by reasons already stated, to reiterate: low bandwidth capacity due to several factors (location, availability of the network, etc.), personal, family-related issues, gadget concerns (gadget sharing, using only a cellphone/tablet instead of laptop or PC), and among others. Matharani et al. (2021) identify this as a structural factor in the digital world dividing among countries in the global south where technological infrastructures and strong institutional support for online learning are lacking.

As a result, the teachers cannot even be assured of the participation of those who are attending synchronous sessions. For one, others may opt not to turn on their cameras to save their bandwidth connection. Some may even lose connection at any time within the session. Others simply do not participate in the discussions. A key informant also mentioned, *"akong na notice sa start sa semester medyo okay pa ang participation but magkadugay hinay na."*

Teachers cannot gauge if they are truly listening. As a response, teachers adopt several strategies for the learners to turn on their cameras during the session for active participation. For example, they allow "freedom background" for students to use a virtual background that will capture their particular mood at the moment. As it is, [Darling-Aduana et al. \(2022\)](#) identify the concern of student participation during the pandemic as a problem that needs a multi-faceted approach given the structural and social factors involved that cannot be immediately addressed. The article leaves a recommendation to rethink policies that can be useful in moving forward, especially in contexts where institutional education policies can go a long way in alleviating online learning challenges, which are expected to stay post-pandemic.

Lack of Resources (Finances and Time)

From the perspective of the teachers, learners had to make a striking balance between student work and personal life. To a great extent, the lack of resources for both finances and time is one of the greatest hurdles. This would be a factor in terms of attendance, participation, and the quality of their coursework. Due to the lack of financial resources, students use online learning as an avenue to engage in part-time employment, whether on-site or on a work-from-home setup. Either of the two posed a big challenge to learning.

As for the teachers, they also need to update their gadgets. Most of them are making use of old laptops or personal computers. Some are sharing gadgets with other members of the household by taking turns in doing their respective tasks.

An alternative means is taken as a resolution to these rising challenges. This is a collaboration between and among the academics of the college, the university, and the academic community. Likewise, collaboration can extend both within the internal and external premises of the university. The key is teamwork, to work as one towards the attainment of a shared goal.

Theme 3: Necessity of Collaborative Teaching Practices

Table 2 presents the reasons and causes of the need to collaborate among academics under the new normal classroom set up. As presented in the table, collaboration is a fitting response to the challenges of the new normal. Collaboration, from the conceptualizing of the course syllabus to the giving of shared outputs for different course subjects, albeit different rubrics, significantly eases the student workload thus, a remedy to avoid mental anxiety for the learners. By collaborating on the content coverage, assessment, and grading system, teachers directly address the burden of overloaded course requirements. More streamlined requirements mean mental ease on the part of the learners, thus generating a positive impact on teachers as well.

A matter of necessity is the practice for regular faculty debriefing, group feed backing, and critiquing for course enhancement. While enhancing the teaching strategies, it also addresses the challenges on the part of the learners. The utilization of collaborative practices among faculty, from building support systems to coordinating output to reference material creation, is even more doable because of technology.

Collaboration is not confined to a particular field of discipline but is rather multi-disciplinary. Teachers collaborate with fellow teachers not only in the same department but also from another department, especially if the expertise in the said area is necessary. There are even initiatives of teachers from one university engaging in collaborative teaching with a teacher from another university or organization through podcasts or webinars. This approach is not just revolutionary but also pragmatic and emergent with the new normal. In pedagogy literature, discussions on collaborative practices among faculty are fairly new. [Yan et al. \(2021\)](#) attribute this to the differences in teaching styles and discipline among

traditional academic practitioners. However, the pandemic set up encouraged the rethinking of efficient teaching delivery in academic institutions. In their study, the practice of team teaching in a project-based seminar was described. Instructors benefitted greatly even from short-term team teaching practice since it unburdened teaching loads and allowed the exploration of best practices in learning management system (LMS) usage. It was also well-received by the students as it lessened outputs that needed to be complied with.

Table 2. *Collaboration as Key in Addressing Challenges of the New Normal*

Cluster Themes	Emergent Theme
Collaborative practices among academics as a way to address the mental health constraints of students and lessen student workload. Collaborative practices among faculty members as a way to address mental health constraints of students and lessening student workload. The utilization of collaborative practices among faculty from building support systems and coordinating out-put to reference material creation. Necessity of the multi-disciplinary approach through team teaching to survive the new normal through shared outputs and sharing of reference materials.	The Necessity of Collaborative Teaching Practices

Theme 4: Team Teaching Resulting from Collaboration

From collaborative practices emanated the conduct of a few styles or forms of teaching teaching. Table 3 lists the various team teaching styles or forms as observed by the key informants.

Evident in Table 3 are the Team Teaching Styles/Forms utilized in the virtual classroom. While it is not expressly worded by the teachers, team teaching in various styles/forms manifests through practice as opposed to actual labels. At the onset, team teaching surfaces through team coordination in syllabus creation. This becomes the most common style or form as this is the most uncomplicated. As observed by the KIs, team teaching is usually done as the semester commences when course syllabi have to be crafted. As per the statement of a KI, *“...we actually planned out and worked together as a department, nag assign mi og faculty sa mga ...So, basically, kadto gyung na train ug nakatudlo sa GE, gigroup to sila to create a model course ba...”* Other activities and programs that call for team coordination are the organization and the conduct of webinars. Various classes of the same course gather together to invite experts as resource persons to share their professional ideas, opinions, and experiences. Thus, establishing greater linkages on the part of the teachers and learners becomes achievable. A KI shared, *“I did collaborate with different institutions, not just universities but organizations, mga NGOs, and uban pa.”*

Moreover, for greater efficacy in terms of content expertise rather than just mere convenience, rotational team teaching is used as an official strategy. As espoused by one KI, they experienced in their department whereby two faculty members take turns in doing synchronous classes for the same course and to the same students. *“I think in Law's first semester that the faculty members really decided to do team teaching. They simply set the time on when the first faculty will attend class or the times assigned to other teachers. So they just divided the time so first session only one then a few sessions teacher 2 and then midterms like that. One teacher was not confident of the entire breadth of the course. So ilahang gi murag tinabangay jud ta ani. They just agreed to handle the course together.”*

In terms of medium, team teaching can also be interactive through podcasts. Teachers use the same platform where they discuss together social issues and problems and share their stand on those issues.

Moreover, interactive team teaching is also called tandem teaching. A KI provided that, *"I did tandem teaching with a colleague during our synchronous session as synthesis to a unit. Since we also share our lecture videos in the same GE course through our LMS, Google Classroom, we decided to do the synthesis together and discuss the part that I did on my lecture video while she did hers..murag puli-puli mi..."* He added that the students found it interesting and exciting, so it kept them glued during the synchronous session. They also asked for more live sessions to witness their tandem teaching.

Table 3. Team Teaching in the Virtual Classroom

Formulated Meaning (based on actual teaching experience)	Team Teaching Styles/Forms
<p>The key informant thought that there was one Law subject in which the faculty decided for the teachers to team teach. They set the time when each faculty would attend the class.</p> <p>The key informant narrated the team teaching experience of dividing the sessions between the teachers since one teacher was not confident with the entire scope of the course.</p> <p>The key informant recalled that there was one particular subject handled by two professors, for them to complement and supplement the respective aspects that they lacked expertise in.</p>	Rotational Team Teaching
<p>The key informant shared that the faculty in their department collaboratively planned and worked to create the framework to follow as they created a model course.</p> <p>The key informant further explained how the teachers involved themselves in team teaching for their assessment to be combined and coincided.</p> <p>The key informant claimed that team teaching was not officially practiced in their institution due to accounting and technical confusion and difficulties such as salary.</p>	Team coordination team teaching through syllabus creation
<p>The key informant admitted that they've been unofficially team teaching in forums and in seminars with other teachers within the university.</p>	Unofficial team coordination teaching through forums and seminars
<p>The key informant collaborated with other teachers, such as podcast projects on topics of expertise.</p>	Interactive team teaching through projects like podcast
<p>The key informant coordinated with different institutions, universities, government organizations, and non-government organizations in facilitating certain classes through the conduct of webinars, forums, and the like.</p>	Team coordination with various institutions and organizations outside the college/university
<p>The key informant shared that he did tandem teaching with a colleague during synchronous sessions by delivering synthesis to a unit with each of them taking part in the sharing.</p>	Interactive Team Teaching /Tandem Teaching

CONCLUSION

The immediate transition to digital educational spaces caused by the pandemic forced teaching practitioners to adapt different teaching strategies in their virtual classrooms. Accordingly, challenges experienced by students and teachers abound in the use of online learning platforms. They included stressors on mental health, low levels of participation in online classes, and the lack of time and financial resources, which are supposedly vital in the digital medium of learning.

Fortunately, collaborative teaching practices minimize the challenges and the burden of teaching practitioners in delivering effective and quality education to students. Team teaching, in particular, has emerged as a collaborative practice of academics to manage the challenges of the new normal. They experienced that the style or form of team teaching practiced was not as significant as the need to work as a team. The style and form then became a natural response to every virtual classroom situation the academic confronted. Thus, the team teaching style or form is dynamic. It varies from time to time, from one situation to another.

At the end of the day, the goal is to make teaching relevant to the urgent needs of the time, most particularly to the students. As such, collaboration is the key.

Recommended Teaching Model for the Enrichment of the Virtual Classroom Experience through Team Teaching

Based on the findings of the study, the following are considered key elements in the proposed teaching model for the enrichment of the virtual classroom experience through team teaching:

- a. Inclusive teaching-learning activities toward a more authentic assessment and engagement in asynchronous sessions
 - i. more relevant teaching-learning resource materials to push for genuine and life-long learning
 - ii. more asynchronous sessions, less synchronous meetings
- b. Communal support for teaching
 - i. collaborate, collaborate, collaborate
- c. Heightened engagement and relevant teaching-learning interaction with students through learning designs, not mere lecture teaching

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Huddle – teachers within the department/college or teaching the same courses will convene before the start of the semester to map /re-map graduate attributes and/or course competencies and draft course syllabi;

Unite – teachers decide on a unified yearly capstone project/s; one, written and the other, a performance task (to be delivered virtually) making sure the competencies in the course they are teaching will be manifested through said project/s

- students are given different ratings per subject by the specific teacher
- an option would be to group courses that share the same competencies so that the teachers unite to decide on a common project to wrap up their learnings leading toward life realizations;

Generate – teachers need to generate and gather learning resource materials, including written assessments, lecture videos, journal articles, books, or general references and put them under one database/bank with the custody of the department/college. This data bank becomes the source of materials for both new and old faculty members who wish to share resources.

- in this phase, the senior teachers can mentor the new/junior teachers through resource sharing;

Participate – teachers handling the same courses and utilizing the same syllabus must join the virtual presentation of capstone projects. Through the leadership of the Department/Program Chair, the capstone projects' presentation is a departmental activity attended by all faculty members.

Organize – teachers organize their virtual classroom accordingly, both synchronous and asynchronous classes. If inclusivity is a priority, there should be fewer sessions for synchronous.

Recordings are considered more inclusive as students may access them at a time they deem most convenient. In contrast, more meaningful asynchronous sessions must be designed.

- Teachers focus on designing learning rather than mere lecture teaching. Teaching has to be made significant by being attuned to the needs of the time;

Necessitate – teachers necessitate the engagement of students to optimize learning. The challenge of the teachers is to make students realize the relevance of the courses they are taking. They must recognize the contribution of the learnings from said courses to their future endeavors. Being able to design the course in a manner that facilitates life skills and life-long learning is best.

- Teachers necessitate a shift in their teaching approach. Reflection for collective action must be exercised by students in the Social Sciences. The virtual teaching-learning atmosphere should be conducive to a student-friendly environment; and

Govern – The governance must welcome this new team strategy to hurdle effectively the challenges faced by the academic community in the new normal. Governance can make or break teaching innovations. The administration must have a paradigm shift towards a more progressive and an inclusive teaching pedagogy, which can be best achieved through collaboration.

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